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Fundraising Opportunities for
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FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MUSEUMS

Elena Borin*

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze the possibilities of private funding for a special kind of museums: science museums and technology centers. In the last years the economic crisis has impacted on the cultural sector, decreasing the public resources traditionally allocated to museums and arts and heritage in general. That has forced art professionals to develop alternative strategies to get the necessary financial support for museum's activities. Although the crisis has affected also private companies and individuals, nowadays fundraising from the private sector seems to be the major alternative to the lack of public funds. I will start this paper analyzing the ethical problems in applying fundraising and marketing in general to museums and then proceed focusing on the main private sponsors of museums in general (foundations, private corporations and individuals). I will then concentrate on science museums addressing their peculiarities and characteristics; I will later deal with issues related to concrete private sponsorship for this type of museums. In the conclusion, I will delineate what some of the major future challenges for this sector are.

Keywords: fundraising, audience analysis, marketing, science and technology museums

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FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MUSEUMS

1. Introduction: fundraising and ethic in museums

In the last years, getting the necessary resources for art activities and museums has become a major challenge. With public funding in decline, it has now become vital that all museums, galleries and cultural institutions invest in acquiring the skills and expertise that will enable them to raise funds from the private sector (i.e. from individuals, foundations and companies).

Although the fundraising is essential to guarantee financial support to the evolution of the museum, many art professionals have expressed a real concern about the influence of the prospective sponsors on the image and mission of their museum. Therefore, the creation of guidelines and the definition of a concrete policy for raising funds is nowadays a crucial point in the development of museum strategies.

Ethical issues are often linked to the apparent contrast between the principles that characterize codes of ethics for museums and the idea of profit that is often associated to the traditional image of private corporations that are always the main targets of the fundraising campaigns. Concerns were already expressed in ICOM *Code of Ethics for Museums*, “the governing body should have a written policy regarding sources of income that it may generate through its activities or accept from outside sources. Regardless of funding source, museums should maintain control of the content and integrity of their programmes, exhibitions and activities. Income-generating activities should not compromise the standards of the institution or its public.”¹

Fundraising and marketing in general are seen as possible menaces to the museum. “Most museum people react to the word “marketing” with the same predictable distaste that Pavlov’s dog showed to water. The feeling that marketing equals crass commercialism equals a threat to professional standards needs to be refuted as the palpable nonsense that it is”².

This eternal dilemma could be solved through a careful monitoring of the agreements between the two parties: “sponsorship agreements are a real phenomenon that has spread everywhere [...]. Usually, they are disciplined by contracts that should protect the legitimate interests of the parties, including a series of guarantee articles”³.

¹ ICOM *Code of Ethics for Museums* in <http://icom.museum/>

² Peter Lewis in Moore K. *Museum management*, Routledge, 1994

³ Anderson E., de Mille A. *Fundraising for Museums*. Friary Press, 2006

Among these articles, Maria Grazia Tomea Gavazzoli⁴ stresses the importance of ethical guarantees on the profile, activities and products of the potential sponsor that should be constantly monitored in comparison with the code of ethics of the museum.

The second main concern of art marketers is the amateur approach of many museum managers towards the search for funds. “The director of the museum often tends to look for funds for his favorite projects alone, with enthusiasm and as an amateur”⁵. Fundraising should instead be supported by a concrete specialization, an effective planning and a carefully studied strategy; therefore, a continuous and progressive change in museum’s attitude towards fundraising and marketing in general is necessary. This implies a multilevel transformation that also means working on positioning, branding, targeting and communication; in other words it means adapting marketing and fundraising strategies to the museum sector.

Communication plays an important role in this process. Museum’s communication should be should be bidirectional and multi-level. Museum’s fundraisers should be able to persuade prospective sponsors that they are investing on an initiative, museum, etc... that is not only reliable but also able to bring a new added value to their company image or to their activities. In addition, museums should take special care in communicating with sponsors not only before the sponsorship has been granted but also after the agreement.

How could marketing and fundraising strategies be applied to the museums sector? Kotler traces the different stages of the development of art fundraising: starting from the initial “begging” approach – cultural institutions simply asking for money to privates and foundations - to the current phase where fundraising means that museums and sponsors work together for a development project. This last stage, defined by Kotler “marketing phase”⁶ consists in applying market segmentation, targeting, positioning and branding to museums. According to Kotler, the central issue is to define a so-called core marketing strategy, a general marketing strategy for the museum which should be at the basis of the fundraising campaign.

⁴ Tomea Gavazzoli M.G. *Manuale di Museologia*, Etas: Milano, 2005

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Kotler N., Kotler P., Kotler W. *Museum marketing and strategy*, John Wiley and Sons, 2008

“The core marketing strategy has four elements:

- Identifying one or more target markets
- Developing a competitive position
- Establishing a marketing mix congruent with the needs of the target marketers
- Creating a positioning strategy that illuminates the distinctiveness of the museum”⁷

The fundraising plan should derive from this strategy, and should create also a potential benefit for each prospective sponsor. According to the English Associations of Independent Museums⁸ “A fundraising strategy should include a statement of the museum’s particular aspirations (its ‘vision’), the stepping stones or stages by which it will achieve its vision, the methods to be used (e.g. sponsorship, trusts and foundations), a budget for fundraising costs, annual and other milestone targets, income projections and a timetable for implementation. It might also set out policies and structures for organising and providing the resources for people who will help to raise the funds.”

The aim of this paper is not to discuss the entire marketing strategy for museums but just to address the points of the fundraising strategy that are peculiar of science museums: the identification of the fundraising targets for which museums could tailor-make proposals that reflect both their peculiarities and the interests of the sponsors.

2. Museum identity and visitors’ analysis as basis for fundraising strategies

A modern approach to fundraising for museums should start from a comprehensive analysis of the context in which the museum operates, given that context means not only the territory and social environment where the museum is located but also the general situation where the museum operates and where it might find its competitors, its public and its sponsors.

The economical, productive, political and social environment might give us important clues on the potential attention of public and private parties in the museum. It might as well inform us about the ongoing cultural trends and on the activities planned in the near future. As far as private enterprises are concerned, an accurate context analysis could provide important information on the situation of a specific productive sector and on the past sponsorship and funding activities of the prospective

⁷ Ibid, p.108

⁸ Associations of Independent Museums – AIM, www.museums.org.uk/aim

sponsors. An analysis of the last activities of a company might complete our understanding of the possible interests of the corporation itself in cultural initiatives and museums. Context analysis means also understanding what the social perception of the museum and the degree of receptivity of museum's activities are; finally, it could give important information about the right strategy to follow to get the attention of potential sponsors and to make the museum's and sponsor's policies merge.

The context analysis should always be combined with a study of the visitors of the museum. Understanding audience is indeed essential to define the right strategy choices and the best paths to secure the "loyalty" of the public of the museum; identifying common points, pros and cons of the possible sponsorship is another undeniable step of the context analysis.

3. Looking for funds: sponsorship opportunities for museums

Right after context and audience analysis, the next step in the fundraising process is mapping potential sponsors. Lucio Argano classifies them into public or private sponsors.⁹

Public sponsors could be either national, regional and local or European and international. Obviously, getting EU or International funds implies complying with a complex procedure that should be carefully studied and planned. Under the category "private funds" we often include very different types of contribution, ranging from technical support, partnerships, individual donations, corporate sponsorships and funds raised through foundations' grants.¹⁰ Individual contributions could be made either by donors (i.e. legacies) or by Friends/members of the museum with specific benefits related to the participation in its activities; contributions from foundations could differ widely in form and amount of the funds allocated.

- **Foundations**

"Some foundations exist solely to give money away and there is a large number of them!"¹¹

Every foundation is different and foundations might derive their funds from a great variety of sources. There are foundations that support general activities and ones that support exclusively a specific sector (education, art, disabled people, etc...). "This is where research and doing your

⁹ Argano L. "*Progettazione e programmazione degli eventi culturali*" in *Gli Eventi Culturali*, AA. VV. Franco Angeli, Milano, 2005, p. 147

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 147

¹¹ Anderson E., de Mille A. *Fundraising for Museums*. Friary Press, 2006

homework is essential. Every trust is different. There is no blanket approach which works for all”¹². Fundraisers should therefore choose carefully the foundation that could be more apt to fund the museum programs. Some foundations are extremely active in supporting museums; in particular they are often available to support special appeals, such as one-off projects or needs more than general running costs. Apart from the so-called “generic foundations” that will support causes of very dissimilar nature, many foundations are administered following the specific guidelines set down by their trustees or by *the settlor*, and are specialized in supporting a definite kind of causes.

- **Private companies**

Private companies are more likely to fund a museum or a cultural proposal that could guarantee benefits for the company such as an increase in sales, a reinforcement of the company image or any other objective that could be perceived as a priority by the company. Mainly, the choice of a private company as target for a fundraising campaign means understanding “what is in for them”, in other words what are the focal points of our identity as a museum that could draw the attention of the company towards us. Fig.1 shows possible benefits companies may be looking for when granting a sponsorship.

Fig. 1 – Prospective benefits for the company¹³

Improving company image	37%
Increasing sales	22%
Increasing company visibility	15%
Role in the society	15%
Supporting a cause	5%
Creating a wide communication mix	4%
Reaching specific targets	2%

In the case of private corporations, ‘sponsorship’ [...] is defined as an agreement between a company and a not-for-profit organisation for the exchange of specific benefits. These usually take the form of marketing benefits to the sponsor. [...] It is important for a museum to clarify the company’s expectations at the outset. It may ask for its logo to appear on the museum’s print and signage, or request complimentary tickets for an event or performance in return for its financial contribution. Although the company will have certain requests it is important for the museum to call

¹² Anderson E., de Mille A. *Fundraising for Museums*. Friary Press, 2006

¹³ Colbert F. et al. *Marketing delle Arti e della Cultura*, Milano, Etas, 2000, p. 238

the tune, and be certain about the type and scale of the company's publicity return. There are ethical issues, for instance, regarding how appropriate it is to allow commercial sponsorship to appear on a museum display"¹⁴.As Elisabeth Anderson states in the previously mentioned quotation, sponsorship means marketing benefits for the company: "In today's climate organisations need to lead, more than ever, with the offer of a 'deal' to a sponsor which is demonstrably worth something to their organization."¹⁵

Making researches on the company is essential to get the pulse of the possible sponsorship; understanding its main interests should be a crucial phase of the fundraising plan. According to Dennis Rich¹⁶, there are four macro-areas that characterize potential sponsors' objectives.

Fig. 2¹⁷

Objectives	Average*
Sales-related objectives	2.93
Increase of the sales	3.26
Easier sales programming	2.58
Product-related objectives	2.90
Increasing product knowledge	3.30
Identifying a specific product with a market segmentation	3.07
Changing product image	2.67
Encourage the consumer to try the product	2.50
Company image-related objectives	2.65
Improve company image	3.56
Enhance knowledge of the company	3.36
Increasing profits in the long run	3.34
Involvement in the local community	3.13
Identifying company with a market segmentation	2.92
Exert a positive influence on opinion leaders	2.88
Acquire new contracts	2.81

¹⁴ Anderson E., de Mille A. *Fundraising for Museums*. Friary Press, 2006

¹⁵ ibid

¹⁶ J. Dennis Rich in Colbert F. *Marketing delle Arti e della Cultura*, p. 220

¹⁷ A. Godbout, N. Turgeon, F. Colbert, *Pratique de la Commandite Commerciale au Quebec: une étude empirique* (Montreal, Chaire de Gestion des arts, école des Hautes études Commerciales, cahier de recherche GA 91-02, September, 1991), 31

Changing public perception of the company	2.58
Personnel and staff-related objectives	2.09
Improving internal staff relationships	2.48
Boosting the morale of staff	2.37
Celebrating a special event	2.31
Press damage control (reacting to negative press releases)	1.98
Reassuring shareholders	1.79
Hiring opportunities for new staff members	1.77

*4 = very important; 3 = important; 2 = less important; 1 = not relevant

As the scheme clearly demonstrates, company sponsors are mainly focused on the sales benefits that may arise from the sponsorship/partnership, on the visibility of their company brand and at the same time on the possible reinforcement of the company relationship with the local or value community.

- **Friends and membership programs**

“Friends and membership schemes [...] can provide valuable regular revenue through subscription payments and the Friends/members often form a museum’s most committed core of supporters, who can be called upon in times.”¹⁸

Membership system can prove a key methods to raise funds for specific activities of the museum: provided that this system should not be the only one used by the museum to raise money, membership programs have successfully obtained funds for many activities. The first step to build an effective membership plan is again an accurate analysis of the visitors of the museum; the membership plan should adapt to their tastes and to their composition. The membership campaigns should be shaped around their interests and mirror their need as museum’s users. The benefits associated to the different types of membership should be appealing and personalized according to members’ tastes.

Actually, relationship marketing could be successfully applied to reinforce membership programs; membership programs are often promoted through the relationship marketing skills of the fundraising staff. Museum’s outreach activities and internal/external communication should be carefully studied to serve as tools to attract visitors.

¹⁸ Anderson E., de Mille A. *Fundraising for Museums*. Friary Press, 2006

Concluding, a necessary side activity of the membership program should be the development of a database of supporters. “Museums and galleries attract visitors. During or immediately following a visit, interest is high, making it the ideal opportunity to begin the process of developing a ‘donor base’, a list of supporters. Some people are happy to donate during a visit so think about information displayed on site, and information visitors can take home, which describes the project and the funding need. It is advisable to seek name and address details [...].Once you have their details and have their consent to be sent ‘information relating to the museum’ (making it clear that you will not pass their details onto anyone outside your organization) it is vital that you keep them informed of developments, through letters, newsletters or emails.”¹⁹

4. Characteristics and peculiarities of science and technology museums

An interesting case among museums is represented by science museums, traditionally considered at the edge between cultural instances and entrepreneurs vocation.

“The fundamental concept in traditional marketing – meeting the needs of the consumer – does not apply in high art. This is what distinguishes cultural marketing from traditional marketing²⁰. The artistic product does not exist to fulfill a market need. Its *raison d’être* is independent of the market, which is what makes it a particular marketing challenge. Instead of seeking to meet consumers’ needs by offering them a product they desire, the arts manager seeks consumers who are attracted to the product.”²¹

Museum of science and technology centers do not completely share this problem since they usually rely on slightly different values compared to art museums: they seek not only visitors who are interested in science but also general visitors for whom they create interactive and entertaining exhibits that will seem as an answer to their entertaining needs.

Indeed, while older science museums used to concentrate on static exhibits where collections were displayed in traditional ways, mainly dividing them into groups according to the scientific subject they deal with (geology, natural history, paleontology, industry, etc...), many if not most modern science museums have introduced many interactive exhibits, underlining also the role of technology in science learning. Scientific education for non-expert visitors has become a major concerns of science museums; this is witnessed also by the name change of some museums that increasingly

¹⁹ Anderson E., de Mille A. *Fundraising for Museums*. Friary Press, 2006

²⁰ Colbert et al., 2001

²¹ Colbert F. “Entrepreneurship and Leadership in Marketing the Arts” in *International Journal of Arts Management*, Vol.6, Number 1 – Fall 2003, p.31

start to call themselves “science centers” or “discovery centers”. According to Kotler, “science and technology museums [...] are not built primarily around collections. [...] Science museums focus on exhibitions as learning experiences [...] with a basis on interactivity that invites touching and experimentation”²². The key issue of these museum is a direct contact with their visitors who are invited to “establish a connection” with the exhibits. The relation established between visitors and museum aims at explaining some of the most important scientific principles.

That could be interpreted as a merging of scientific education with entertainment purposes. The desire to answer to the scientific education’s needs of society become satisfied by presenting scientific issues as “discoveries”. Their exhibitions re-discover the fun, interactive, stimulating aspects of science in order to adapt it to the consumer’s need for entertainment. Neil e Philip Kotler argue that museums of science and technology have registered in these last years a relevant increase in number of new centers and amount of visitors thanks to these characteristics.

A direct consequence of science museums’ tendencies towards interactivity is that their audience increasingly includes not only science experts but also people with lower or no preparation on scientific subjects; one-term visitors are quite the standard and, especially when we talk about students, they don’t need to be specifically interested in science or to be science professionals to enjoy museum’s collections.

Interactivity and multisensory stimuli are at the basis of science museums’ experiences but practical demonstrations and interactive exhibits require a maintenance routine that could be rather expensive. Moreover, museum personnel should be trained not only about science, technology and subjects related to the museum’s collections but also on communication techniques to involve and motivate the visitors to the use of the interactive material. That implies that these museums need developing skills in attracting funds and planning effective fundraising strategies in order to gain enough financial support for staff training or conservation.

²² Kotler, p.291

5. Audience in science museums

The peculiarities of the public of science and technology museums is fundamental to understand what is the museum's attractiveness to prospective sponsors, since audience is at the core of the different marketing strategies and possible co-operations. Audience influences a relevant part of the fundraising campaigns, because it is an indicator of the possible targets of the sponsor.

The interactive nature of these museums has often proved appealing for children and families, high school students, teachers, school staff in general. "More young people (including school groups) visited science museums than other types of museums [...] . Adult visitors to science museums [...] were twice as likely to have come with children than was the case for adults visiting art museums"²³

Attracting more easily an audience of children and young adults is therefore a characteristic of science museums. They are more appealing also to teachers and professors who often use them as effective educational tools that can supply the scientific laboratories that are often missing in their schools. As a consequence, exhibitions proved to be attractive for schools that are interested in their educational potential, to foundations those guidelines include donation to educational or children activities. This characteristic has a deep impact on the museology aspects of the museum, on its architecture that should include specific spaces for laboratories and experiential learning activities, and the structure of its exhibition design: there is a strong need for spaces that will look more appealing for this kind of target audience, that's to say colorful and dynamic spaces, where exhibits can construct areas of interest for visitors drawing from their creativity, imagination and active participation.

As far as science museums are concerned, visitors are mainly students or school personnel; therefore, it is interesting to check which part of the private companies should be interested in addressing this segment of the population. The mapping of the prospective interested parties is the first step of the communication campaign for fund raising. There is no substantial difference between science museums and other kind of museum during this first phase: fundraisers should verify what could be the stakeholders interested in the brand image of the museums and basing their effort in order to reach them.

²³ Smithsonian Institutions, 2004 - <http://www.si.edu/>

6. Prospective sponsors: foundations, private companies and individuals

As stated above, science museums have the advantage to combine conservation and research aims with education purposes. Science centers are often linked to University, Research Structures and laboratories, etc.... that are thematically similar. These collaborations allow them to receive grants and funds from the public sector, either at local or at a national/international level.

Nevertheless, in the last years the economic crisis has impacted on the funds traditionally allocated to education and culture, and science museums have registered a contraction of the public contribution. As a consequence, they are now facing the challenges of fundraising in the private sector, and are trying to develop effective fundraising strategy to preserve, implement and design their exhibits and their activities.

- **Foundations**

Science museums should look for those foundations that are linked to scientific guidelines or that express a mission related to scientific outreach. Scientific foundations might be attracted to financing specific events for science professionals such as conferences and science seminars.

Foundations that are interested in training and education, should be also a good target for fundraising campaigns. Those foundations might be also interested in associating their name to the museum in the long run, funding institutional costs instead of specific projects.

Foundations that support children might be interesting too. As stated above, children are among the main visitors of science museums and the majority of the museum's programs and initiatives, exhibitions and laboratories are often children-oriented.

Another option are foundations linked to the local community. A science museum contributes to the life and development of the local community and often takes special care of the educational needs of the community children. The brand of a science museum as aggregation centre for the local community acquires a special value for local community foundations.

- **Private companies**

The peculiarities of fundraising for Science Museums emerge while planning fund raising strategies for private companies. In those situations, marketing traditional strategies are applied and adapted to the science museum context. As pointed out by Elisabeth Anderson, sponsorship means marketing benefits for the company: "In today's climate organisations need to lead, more than ever,

with the offer of a ‘deal’ to a sponsor which is demonstrably worth something to their organisation.”²⁴

Starting from the analysis developed in the previous chapters, in the following paragraphs I will try to contextualize Dennis Rich’s “objectives” in the fundraising for science museums. I will begin with the last objective, since in my opinion product related and company related objectives are complementary, if not subordinated, to sales and profit objectives.

In this perspective, sponsorship is just another investment made by the company to increase public knowledge of its brand and its product and consequently increase sales in the long period.

▪ **Company image-related objectives**

The above mentioned company image-related objectives could be summed up in two main categories:

— *Enhancing company image, increasing brand awareness in a specific market segment.*

As mentioned above, science museums have two main characteristics that could be used by the company to reach its brand awareness in a community:

- Contributing to education through interactive activities and exhibits.
- Addressing young visitors (although not exclusively)

On the basis of those points, companies that could be interested in sponsoring a science museum are those whose image and target market are related to some extent to children (toys firms, school related companies such as publishing companies, companies that produce scientific tools for children, etc...) and that are interested in associating their company profile with ideas of children education and protection.

— *Getting involved in the local community.*

Science museums are often used as teaching tools in those schools and educational structures that cannot rely on own laboratories and teaching facilities. Science museums will benefit from a relevant authority among school communities and could be considered by local communities as an important educational center for their children. Companies might be interested in participating as sponsor in a project since the museum might become a reference point for the community at a local, regional, national and even international level, depending on its structure and resources. The capacity of generating tourist affluence might be another relevant point for the impact of the museum on the community: visitors may need other local resources such as restaurants, hotels,

²⁴ Anderson E., de Mille A. *Fundraising for Museums*. Friary Press, 2006

public transport, etc... thus contributing to the welfare of their territory. Therefore, also companies interested in linking their names with the local tourist framework could be involved.

- **Product-related objectives**

In my opinion, companies whose production are related to scientific production and companies who produce goods related to science museum's audience (children, schools, families, teachers, etc... as mentioned in the previous pages) are the best targets of fundraising campaigns.

The companies mentioned above could be in the first case firms that produce chemical substances, nanotechnology companies, or enterprises developing products or services for universities or research laboratories. This kind of corporations might be interested in sponsoring a scientific museum not only because the collaboration will be related to the research world that is their major customer and share its operational sector, but also because it will be a good chance to trigger new collaborations with the network of contacts of the science museum.

Companies producing or commercializing products for children and families could instead be interested in sponsorships to science museums since they will associate their brand and corporate profile with an activity that is highly appreciated by the target market, thus hoping to increase their sales in the long run.

- **Sales related objectives**

Increasing sales is the objective that exists underneath the other objectives; it could be also seen as the synthesis of the whole objective scheme proposed by Dennis Rich, as it witness by 2.93 score it reaches in the objective list. It is very likely that an increase in sales would follow a successful sponsorship based on branding and positioning aims. The whole list of the objectives should be therefore included in this last category; sales increase should be the "promise" implicitly mentioned in all sponsorships proposals.

- **Individuals: donors and membership programs**

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, the public of science museums is composed by school children, families and teachers. Membership programs should be supported by the relationship marketing skills of the fundraising staff; actually, relationship marketing could be successfully applied to reinforce membership programs. Museum's outreach activities and internal/external communication should be carefully studied to serve as means of visitors attraction. In my opinion, museums communication office of scientific museum should therefore create activities that could attract teachers, pupils and families.

As far as teachers are concerned, for example, they could organized conferences about science education in schools, seminars or even entertainment activities as in the Italian Museo Tridentino di Scienze Naturali where the “Caffè degli insegnanti”, (Coffee for teachers)²⁵ has successfully be organized for years. In this activity, the community of local educators meet inside the museum to share some hours together discussing in a relaxed and informal environment about their job and their common interests. Teacher are attracted to this activity that reinforces their identity as group and at the same time provide a leisure moment to share together and create a network of contacts.

As far as children are concerned, it is unlikely that a child could decide autonomously to subscribe for a museum membership. Therefore, membership campaigns should focus on benefits related to both children and their families, such as laboratories for families, summer camps related to science or other activities designed for the family groups.

As for the scientific community (scientists, researches, university students, etc...), it is usually not very appealed by science museums. If the membership campaign intend to address this kind of audience, it should include activities that are not strictly related to the common experience of a science museums, such as specific seminars for science professionals, meetings and conferences that could serve as debate occasions for science specialists.

University students could be analyzed as special category; they are still not science professionals but obviously they are not likely to be interested in initiatives designed for students. The membership choices for students proposed by the Maryland Science Center²⁶ are a good example of how students could be involved in the museum membership policy. Becoming members of the museum, they have the chance to volunteer during summer break or could participate in didactical and educational activities thus reinforcing their identification with the museum.

Finally, an interesting side activity of the membership program should be the development of a database of supporters. “Museums and galleries attract visitors. During or immediately following a visit, interest is high, making it the ideal opportunity to begin the process of developing a ‘donor base’, a list of supporters. Some people are happy to donate during a visit so think about information displayed on site, and information visitors can take home, which describes the project

²⁵ Museo Tridentino di Scienze naturali, <http://www.mtsn.tn.it/>

²⁶ Maryland Science Center in Baltimore USA, <http://www.mdsci.org/>

and the funding need. It is advisable to seek name and address details [...].Once you have their details and have their consent to be sent ‘information relating to the museum’ (making it clear that you will not pass their details onto anyone outside your organization) it is vital that you keep them informed of developments, through letters, newsletters or emails.”²⁷

7. Fundraising for scientific museums: future challenges

As stated at the beginning of this paper, in the years that preceded the crisis scientific museums have increased constantly in the number of initiatives and visitors; their success testified society’s search for valid educational tools as well as the need to combine education issues with interactivity and entertainment. Nonetheless in the scenario that resulted from the economic crisis, they are facing a decrease in their traditional forms of financial support; fundraising in the private sector could become a valid alternative, the solution to the contraction of public funds. Given that also the private segment is facing the impact of the crisis and therefore companies and individuals are less available to sponsor or donate, science museums could still be successful in conveying funds for their activities. In order to do this, they should work on their ability to propose innovative project and to answer to the current needs of society.

Fundraising seems an important part of museum’s activities not only as a mere tool to provide the necessary resources but also as a mean of development of the whole community.

Indeed, sponsorships, donations and membership programs could work as instruments to create or reinforce the existing social and relational net of the community where the museum is located.

Science museums and centers could also help bridging the gap between private companies and educational institutions such as high schools, universities and research centers that could be involved in the projects proposed for sponsorships. Thus, they will contribute to the life of the community and help creating useful connection between education and job market. Fundraising programs that are centered on the membership proposals are also very effective in reinforcing the identity of the local communities of the territory.

²⁷ Anderson, de Mille

The interactive nature of science museums, their attempt to always creating “connections” between visitors and museum should be mirrored also in its fundraising campaigns. The co-operational framework at the basis of those museums and their vocation as tools of experimentation and research should be reflected in the active involvement of private companies, individuals and foundations in their initiatives. The future challenge for science museums is therefore to create projects that are not only able to attract funds but also to create good link between the different instances – individuals, social communities, local economical enterprises – in order to increase the social cohesion of the territory and promote its development.

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